

THE VOICE AND VISION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

MARCH 2005

Editor: Bill Carr (Virginia Beach)

A Message from our president,



Velera Gammons

Due to the recent tragedy caused by the death of a school bus shot by one of her passengers in Cumberland City, Tennessee this edition of the VAPT newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Joyce Gregory, the driver of the school bus. Most of this month's newsletter consists of information provided by various national pupil transportation associations and from the Tennessee Association of Pupil Transportation.

On a much lighter note, but important to our association members - please do not forget to register for the 2005 Annual Virginia Pupil Transportation Conference being held in Hampton on June 19-22, 2005, at the Holiday Inn Hampton Hotel and Conference Center. The theme of this year's conference is; "A Safe and Secure Pupil Transportation System." All members should have received a packet of information to include a conference registration form and VAPT membership application

*You may register on-line and use a credit card or Purchase Order (PO) - www.napt.org (go to the VAPT icon). If you register by mail, fill out all forms; prepare checks for everything, including membership; make checks payable to NAPT; and mail everything to **NAPT, 1840 Western Avenue, Albany NY 12203.***

VAPT WEB SITE: www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/FINANCE/VAPT

NEWS from NASDPTS...

The presidents of all three national school transportation associations have released a statement regarding the school bus driver shooting tragedy in Tennessee. The statement was released by Pete Japikse (NASDPTS), Steve Kalmes (NAPT), and Dale Krapf (NSTA) as follows:

March 3, 2005

Dear School Transportation Colleague:

This communication is being shared with each of you on behalf of your professional associations. It is a personal communication from the presidents of each of your associations, but one that is common to us all.

Tuesday morning's shooting of a school bus driver have left many of us thinking and asking – have we done enough? And also, just what have we done? Collectively and individually, all of us in the industry have invested much in shepherding our industry to the position it is in today – the safest way for a child to travel. And while that is notable, there is never time to stop and look back – we have to keep going forward. In that light, the three associations have come to recognize the commonality of our purpose, and we have begun to devote much time and energy to developing synergy of our activities. That is leading to important steps forward in the name of pupil transportation. Smoke and mirrors, you ask? Absolutely not! While our steps forward with regard to pupil transportation safety and security sometimes feel like they are not happening fast enough, the momentum is building. Stay tuned... the momentum builds, we will be asking many if not all of you to participate actively.

With regard to Tuesday's shooting – please take the opportunity to reflect on the following.

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Like 500,000 fellow school bus drivers around the country, Joyce Gregory's day began very early and routinely when she left her home to begin her route.

But unlike any other driver in the long and proud history of pupil transportation, her day and future ended suddenly and criminally when a teenage student, who rode her bus, shot and killed her as she stopped to pick him up.

What an especially chilling and senseless end of a life marked by caring for others. Our heartfelt condolences and prayers are with the Gregory family, and the families of the children riding in her bus who are traumatized for life by the horror they witnessed on the morning of March 2 in rural Tennessee.

Nationally, the school bus industry is especially close-knit, and we mourn the loss of a wife, mother of two, and colleague. Many parents of Cumberland City, Tennessee knew Joyce Gregory as the responsible,

reliable adult that she was – a caring professional to whom the safety of their children was entrusted two times every school day.

The big yellow school bus is emblematic of our freedom, mobility and confidence that our children are safe and secure. The murder of Joyce Gregory reverberates in every city and town because every city and town operates yellow school buses just like the one in which Joyce Gregory was slain.

Parents, children, and members of the school transportation industry have never been touched closely by an incident like this. Now, we live in a different time – a tragedy such as this will cause many to ask, “Is my child’s school bus safe?” The answer is yes – a school bus is the safest vehicle on the road. There is no safer way for a child to get to and from school. Parents also should know that the people that work in the school transportation industry hold the safety and security of children in the highest regard. And, many of those professionals are stakeholders as well – their own children ride yellow school buses on a daily basis. That role of stakeholder, and the very real awareness that they are safeguarding our future on a daily basis, is what leads those in pupil transportation to exhibit a real passion for the industry. It also leads to a commitment to safety and security that is the envy of every other transportation industry.

The school transportation industry always has and always will take proactive steps to evaluate all issues related to school bus safety and security. And while it is difficult to stop some types of violence, it is not impossible. In recognition of this the three national associations have initiated work jointly with Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Highway Watch and other resources to take important strides forward. Our goals, which are those of all of us in this industry, are to direct our energies and passion for our work into further maximizing the safety of our school children and continuously reanalyzing the security of our school buses.

As parents, students, transportation professionals, and world citizens, we mourn the passing of Joyce Gregory. But rest assured in the knowledge that her tragic death will inspire her colleagues across the nation to work even harder to further the safety and security of children as they ride in the big yellow school bus.

Steven Kalmes
President, NAPT

Pete Japikse
President, NASDPTS

Dale Krapf
President, NSTA

NEWS FROM the School Bus Information Council...

March 3, 2005

The School Bus Information Council has released a statement to the national press about the sudden and criminal act that caused the death of school bus driver Joyce Gregory on March 2, 2005 in Cumberland City, TN. (Visit www.schoolbusinfo.org and click on the "press releases" link to view it.) Everyone in our industry is shocked and saddened by this especially chilling and senseless end to the all-to-short life of a school bus driver who was simply doing her job.

Members of the school transportation community have been touched by this unprecedented incident. Everyone is especially concerned for the families and particularly the children who were riding Ms. Gregory's bus at the time she was murdered. Many people are wondering what they can do.

If you are interested in helping create a light in the darkness of the aftermath to this tragedy, we encourage you to start by doing two things:

First and foremost, send your condolences for the Gregory family to:

Anglin Funeral Home
402 Donelson Parkway
Dover, TN 37058

Those who are interested can send a contribution in "Memory of Joyce Gregory" to:

AmSouth Bank
Attn: Sherry Garner
PO Box 432
Dover, TN 37058
Account#0052-2288-00

Second, while we all mourn for the Gregory family and the community where Joyce Gregory lived and worked, we encourage you to direct your passion for the safety of school children at the challenge presented by this tragic circumstance. We hope and fully expect that Joyce Gregory's death will inspire her colleagues across the nation to work even harder to enhance the safety and security of children as they ride in the big yellow school bus.

NEWS from the Tennessee Association of Pupil Transportation. TAPT's web site: www.tapt.org

CAMPAIGN

Sponsored by TAPT

A School Bus Driver recognition campaign launched by TAPT - to have a postage stamp issued that recognizes the nation's school bus drivers.

Our Mission

We would like the United States Postal Service to issue a postage stamp to honor the work of our nation's 550,000 school bus drivers.

Background

On March 2, 2005 in Cumberland City, Tennessee, school bus driver Joyce Gregory was murdered by one of her bus riders.

Joyce, like thousands of other dedicated school bus drivers, was just doing her job.

The Tennessee Association of Pupil Transportation is soliciting help from all pupil transportation employees and all state and national educational service organizations to request that the United States Postal Service (USPS) create and issue a postage stamp dedicated to the nation's school bus drivers.

Even though the stamp will not honor Joyce Gregory specifically, Joyce's death serves as the inspiration for our request to the USPS.

School bus drivers play a vital (and often unappreciated) role in our educational system and in the lives of our children.

Did You Know?

There are approximately 500,000 school bus drivers in the United States

Who transport over 25,000,000 children twice each day - that's 55% of our k-12 students.

School buses are the safest form of ground transportation. In fact they are 40 times safer than the family car.

And Yet....

School bus drivers face innumerable challenges:

- They have their backs to a bus full of children...
- While trying to drive a 32,000 pound vehicle in various road and weather (and traffic) conditions...
- Among other drivers on the road who may not be following rules.
- While, unfortunately, often getting little support from students, parents, and school.

The Time is Now

A United States Postage Stamp is a unique way to recognize this country's school bus drivers. These are the men and women who sometimes despite the odds get our children to school in the safest form of ground transportation there is.

How Can I Help?

The Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee of the United States Postal Service recommends which stamps will get printed. All you need to do is write a letter to the CSAC requesting they issue a stamp to honor school bus drivers. Ask your friends, relatives and colleagues to also write letters. The more letters CSAC receives, the better the chance we have to get our stamp! Please see "Letters" page for details.

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

--- Norman MacEwan

NEWS from Rockingham County Transportation Office...

Jim Slye, Director of Transportation writes to inform us they have a technician staff of 10 people; a shop foreman, an assistant shop foreman, a parts man, and 7 technicians. Six of the ten people are certified as Master School Bus Technicians through ASE.

They are Alvin Estep, Foreman, Jim Winegard, Assistant Foreman, Steve Olinger, Garland Huffman, Steve Winegard, and Glenn See. This is pretty impressive out of a maintenance staff of 10 folks!

Interstate 95 Safety Corridor. . .

(Speeding Tickets to Reduce Crashes in Virginia)

For those who may not know, VDOT has designated an 11-mile stretch of the I-95 corridor in Prince William County as a Highway Safety Corridor. This designation began March 18, 2005. There are designated signs with fines posted at the beginning and end of the designated area. Unmarked Virginia State Police cars of various makes and models will be utilized to catch violators. You may want to visit the following link for more information.

<http://www.virginiadot.org/comtravel/ct-highway-safety-corridor.asp>
Click on Designating Corridors.

NEWS from Frederick County Transportation...

Jack Curtin would like to know if anyone has an automated school bus washer. If so, please provide the following information:

Brand of Equipment: _____

Approximate Cost: _____

How long have you had the equipment? _____

Have you been satisfied with the performance? _____

Information is requested ASAP as they will be going before the school board in the very near future and would like to present this information. Your Wash Building does not need to be included.

Thank you for your assistance.

Jack Curtin, Fleet Manager
Frederick County Public Schools
Transportation Department
178 Indian Hollow Road
Winchester, VA 22603
curtinj@frederick.k12.va.us
Phone: 540-667-2770 (extension 209)
Fax: 540-722-9322

DMV and the CDL...

DMV is going to be charging new trainees when they go to convert their license to the CDL. This \$10 fee is supposedly a reissue fee only and not an additional charge for adding endorsements, etc.. I guess it is to cover the cost of a new picture, plastic jacket, etc. and not just a revenue source for them. So, the "J" restriction allows public school bus drivers to avoid paying added fees for the CDL, but they will have to pay the reissue fee.

Congratulations Floyd Morris, Jr.

for recently receiving the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce's Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Floyd is the founder and president of Kingmore Supply in Weyers Cave, a company that sells school buses, and offers replacement parts and repair service to public school districts. Great accomplishment, Floyd – we are proud of you!

NASDPTS provides us with the following information –

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has denied a Petition for Rulemaking from a petitioner who suggested that the test cylinder locations that are used to show compliance with FMVSS No. 111 needed to be reconsidered. In its denial of the petition, NHTSA has released a new graphic that displays the minimum viewing areas required by the System A and System B mirrors required on school buses under FMVSS No. 111.

You may request a copy of the Federal Register notice that denies the petition from NASDPTS's Executive Director, Charles Gauthier at ExecDir@nasdpts.org.

